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17-year-old Wins National Peace Video Contest For Second Year Running

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SANTA BARBARA -- Teenager Erik Choquette has created a remarkable animated video to claim the \$1,000 first prize in the 2009 Swackhamer Disarmament Video Contest for the second year in a row.

Called *The Nuclear Genie*, the three minute video uses inventive graphics to connect nuclear weapons history with a way to “get the genie back in the bottle” through public participation in the democratic process.

The top three videos, as well as the four receiving honorable mention, can be viewed on line at:

<http://www.wagingpeace.org/menu/programs/awards-&-contests/video-contest/2009/winners.htm>



Choquette, 17, had a clear strategy for this year’s competition. “I focused on a call to action and how this issue has influenced our society for so long,” he said. “It’s an issue that many people simply ignore, never fully realizing, or wanting to realize, the possible effects of using a nuclear weapon again especially in our modern society.”

There were 120 videos submitted to this year’s Swackhamer competition. They displayed a variety of approaches from animation to claymation to live action drama. There was even one nuclear disarmament rap – “War on Nuclear Warheads” – which ended up getting Honorable Mention

“The judges and the staff of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation were all overwhelmed at the research, creativity and countless hours that went in to each of the videos,” said Rick Wayman, Director of Programs for the Foundation and contest coordinator. “It was difficult to pick the winners for this year’s contest; there were many videos contesting for the top spots. We honor each and every one of the entrants for their commitment to the cause.”

Choquette enters his senior year at Santa Barbara High School this fall. It promises to be a very busy time in his life.

“I’m applying to roughly 9-10 major film schools like USC, NYU, and UCLA. My dream school is USC, but it’s going to take a lot to get in. For now, I’m starting to focus on narrative filmmaking. I’m starting production soon on a film I wrote several months ago which will act as an application film for colleges, but also as a film to enter into festivals.”

Second prize, and \$750, went to the animated video, "Numbers of Destruction" by Tyler Short of Portland, Oregon. Third prize, and \$250, was awarded to "Beautiful World" by Calvin Brue of Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

All videos had to be three minutes or less.

The topic for the contest was: *“Breakthrough: Putting the Nuclear Genie Back in the Bottle -- How can we achieve a world free of nuclear weapons by the year 2020? Once this is achieved, how can we make sure that the “nuclear genie” stays in the bottle forever?”*

The video contest will be held annually. There will be an announcement about the next contest in March 2010.

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